Town of Westford

PAYT and Waste Reduction Planning Update

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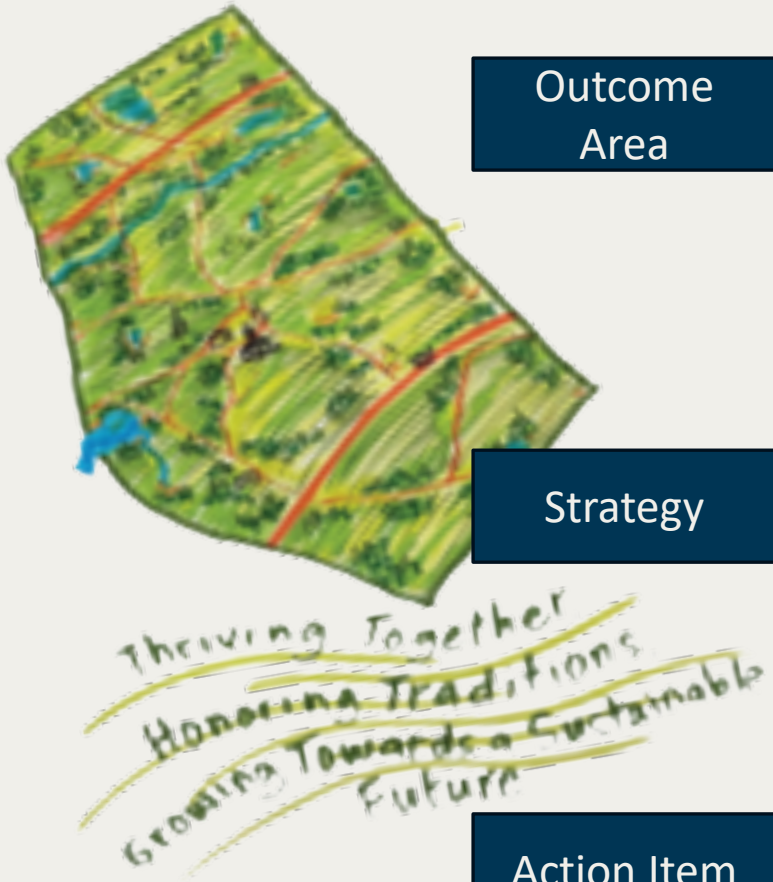
Assistant Town Manager – Strategic Operations
September 23, 2025

Agenda

- Strategic Plan Alignment
- Review of FY2025 Program Changes & Impact
- How does Westford Compare & what are other towns doing?
- PAYT options & recommendations
- Impacts of PAYT on residents and Town
- Other recommendations
- Summary of request for Select Board guidance
- Questions

Strategic Outcome Areas



Outcome Area →

- **Commitment to Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action**

Strategy →

- **Develop a comprehensive waste reduction strategy to include residential and municipal sectors**

Action Item →

- **Implement Pay-As-You-Throw curbside collection**

FY2025 Key curbside program changes (effective July 1, 2024)

- Clarified existing Select Board policies on trash volume (96 gallon) and 3-container limits per household
- Changes to bulky waste curbside collection
  - Fee increased from $5 to $15 for Town sticker – strict limits on curbside collection by hauler (1 burnable item, under 50lbs, per week)
  - All other items collected by hauler by appointment; not included in Town revenue or Town disposal tonnages
- Increased hauler enforcement of household trash limits and curbside bulky waste
- Robust public outreach and information campaign before and after contract date

Impact of program changes

Solid Waste Tonnage					change		change	
	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY25>FY24	as %	FY26>FY25	as %
July	530.39	558.61	464.14	487.75	(94.47)	-16.9%	23.61	5.1%
August	589.51	619.37	512.45	516.75	(106.92)	-17.3%	4.30	0.8%
September	601.38	589.58	471.04	-	(118.54)	-20.1%		
October	556.81	584.95	595.63	-	10.68	1.8%		
November	599.35	603.42	482.39	-	(121.03)	-20.1%		
December	558.56	567.65	508.38	-	(59.27)	-10.4%		
January	587.92	574.01	516.36	-	(57.65)	-10.0%		
February	443.10	472.21	362.91	-	(109.30)	-23.1%		
March	536.99	502.04	460.65	-	(41.39)	-8.2%		
April	519.01	562.63	480.95	-	(81.68)	-14.5%		
May	591.33	609.86	510.47	-	(99.39)	-16.3%		
June	628.02	580.81	495.31	-	(85.50)	-14.7%		
Total	**6,742.37**	**6,825.14**	**5,860.68**	**1,004.50**	**(964.46)**	**-14.2%**	**27.91**	**3.0%**
Increase over prior year - tons		82.77	(964.46)					
% Increase over prior year		1.2%	-14.1%					
Average Monthly Inc(Dec) FY25 vs. FY24					(80.37)			

Impact of program changes (cont.)

Recycling Tonnage					change	
		FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY25>FY24	as %
July		166.94	166.09	152.66	(13.43)	-8.1%
August		171.34	186.75	174.01	(12.74)	-6.8%
September		134.53	178.32	179.46	1.14	0.6%
October		175.40	162.43	131.30	(31.13)	-19.2%
November		188.73	169.67	128.46	(41.21)	-24.3%
December		186.54	194.79	171.60	(23.19)	-11.9%
January		211.24	194.82	205.76	10.94	5.6%
February		143.21	123.01	137.73	14.72	12.0%
March		178.68	132.05	158.70	26.65	20.2%
April		153.32	175.98	165.48	(10.50)	-6.0%
May		170.35	195.57	176.18	(19.39)	-9.9%
June		186.65	180.52	159.45	(21.07)	-11.7%
	Total	**2,066.93**	**2,060.00**	**1,940.79**	**(119.21)**	

Where are we now?

				FY2025>FY2024	
	FY2023	***FY2024***	***FY2025***	***Tons***	***%***
Total Trash	*6,742.37*	*6,825.14*	*5,860.68*	*(964.46)*	*-14.13%*
Total Recycling	*2,066.93*	*2,060.00*	*1,940.79*	*(119.21)*	*-5.79%*
Total entering waste stream	***8,809.30***	***8,885.14***	***7,801.47***	***(1,083.67)***	***-12.20%***
Recycling as % of total	*23.5%*	*23.2%*	*24.9%*		
FY2025 Tons per Household Served		n/a	0.731		
CY2024 Tons per Household Served			0.784		

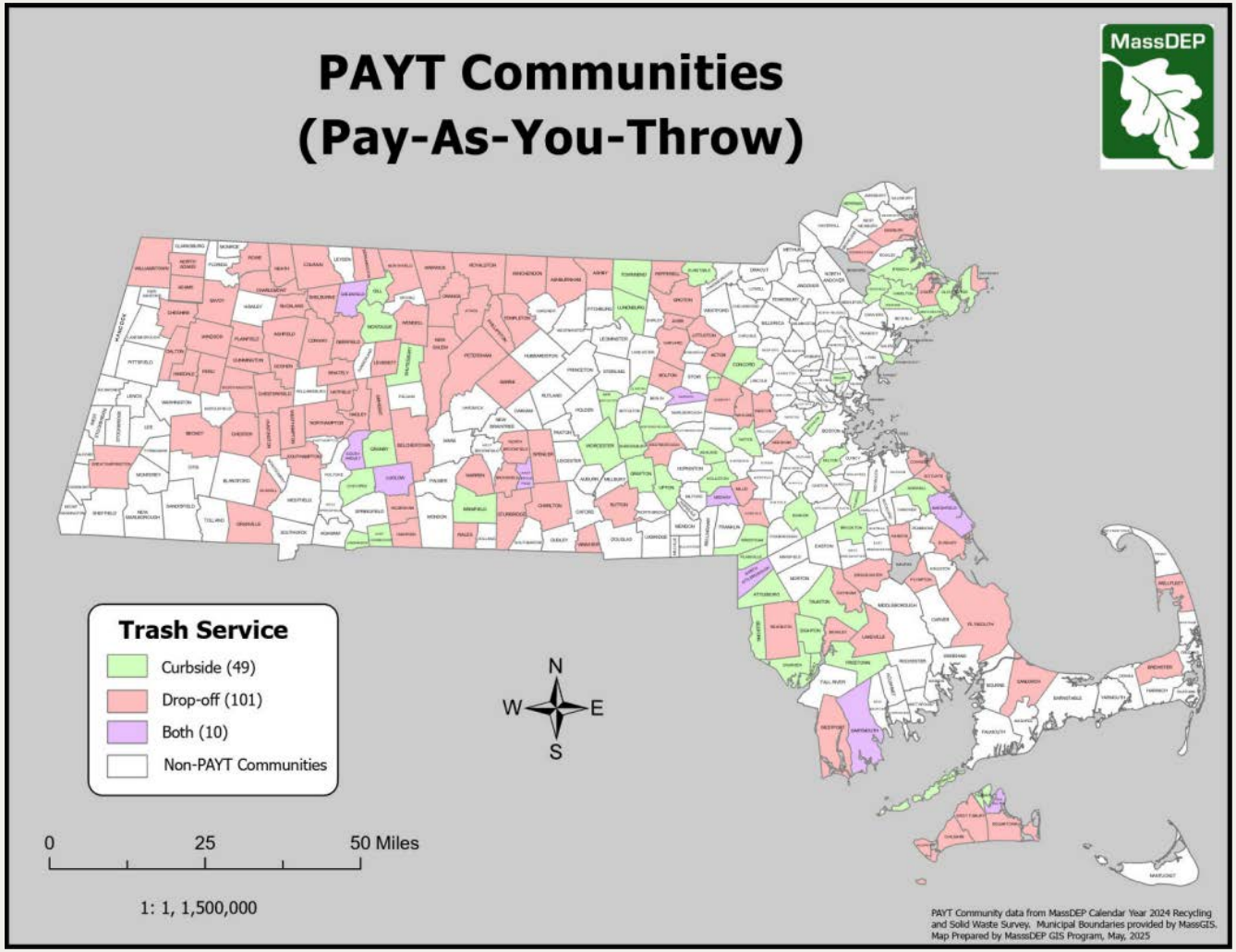
How does Westford compare?

Tons of Trash per Household Served

	Tons per Houshold Served	# of Towns	
CY2024 Average - All MA Curbside	0.75	119	
CY2024 Average - Market Basket Curbside	0.81	17	
CY2024 Average - PAYT Curbside	0.59	45	
As Compared to PAYT Curbside Programs			**Disposal Costs @ 99.77$/ton**
FY2025 Westford	0.73	**0.14**	$ 109,397
CY2024 Westford	0.78	**0.19**	$ 151,649
CY2021 Westford (Budget Task Force Report)	0.95	**0.36**	

Source: CY2024 MassDEP MuniData (reporting communities only); updated per July 2025 MassDEP PAYT Curbside report

What is the rest of MA doing?



Source: July 2025 MassDEP; includes towns that did not submit CY2024 MuniData

What is the rest of MA doing?

- 143 municipalities have some form of trash metering (PAYT) with average tons/HH of .50
  - 55 have curbside with or without drop-off (.59 tons/HH)
  - 45 have curbside PAYT only (.59 tons/HH)
  - 18 have curbside PAYT with bags (.52 tons/HH)
  - 37 have some form of hybrid/modified PAYT (.58 tons/HH)
  - 17 have curbside hybrid PAYT w/35g cart basic service (.67 tons/HH)
    - Overflow varies between stickers, bags, 2nd carts, variable cart size
    - Basic service not always included in taxes; annual fees vary

Where should Westford go?
Fee for Service/Trash Metering Strategy

- As a waste reduction tool…
  - Household standard based on target tons per household
- As a tool to improve service delivery…
  - Move majority of collection to automated pickup with standardized cart
  - Provide cost-effective way to allow residents to dispose of excess waste
- As a tool to support housing and economic development goals…
  - Shift a portion of tax burden from businesses and multi-family taxpayers that are not eligible for curbside program
- As a revenue tool…
  - Recommendation to use only for trash in excess of waste targets; current tax levy should cover basic household service

Options considered and rejected

- PAYT Bags
  - Highest tonnage reduction potential, but…
  - Higher collection costs
  - Difficult to provide an “in-levy basic service”
  - Moves us further away from automated collection
  - Less suitable for rural/dispersed households for curbside
- Variable-sized carts
  - No evidence to support this results in significant tonnage reduction
  - Requires significant cart investment and staff time to maintain inventory and provide enforcement
- Flat annual fee per household
  - No incentive to reduce waste
  - Disproportionate impact on small/single/senior households

Cart size considerations

- Based on FY2025 resident survey data and average trash per household, most households will find 35-gallon cart adequate most of the time
- MassDEP grant will cover 65-75% of 35G cost
- 35-gallon cart is only option that allows in-levy basic service and fee for excess

35-gallon cart

Resident survey responses

PAYT Resident Survey Question

How many tall kitchen garbage bags (13-gallon) does your household dispose of in the trash in a typical week? (please don't include occasional high-volume weeks, special occasions or seasonal cleaning…just a normal week). Filtered for eligible households, excluding MF 4 units and over.

1 bag or less	248	17.35%
2-3 bags	664	46.47%
4-6 bags	384	26.87%
7-10 bags	90	6.30%
More than 10 bags	8	0.56%
I don't know	7	0.49%
Total	**1,401**	

64%

35-gallon cart
Average trash per household

	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2025>FY2024 Tons	%
Total Trash	*6,742.37*	*6,825.14*	*5,860.68*	*(964.46)*	*-14.13%*
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FY2025 Tons per Household Served		n/a	0.731
CY2024 Tons per Household Served			0.784

FY2025 lbs. per Household Served	1,461.70
Per week lbs	28.11
Pounds per gallon of loose residential waste	1.24
capacity of 35G cart in lbs	43.32
Average weekly utilization of 35G cart	65%

Option #1
Hybrid PAYT – 35G cart + 2nd cart

- Program features:
  - 35G cart – 1 per household under current tax levy (no charge)
  - 32G cart available for purchase and annual fee
    - Annual sticker sold by Town placed on 2nd cart
    - 2 cart limit; option to allow bags as well but adds to program complexity and may negatively impact trash reduction goals

Photo: Town of Topsfield

Option #1
Hybrid PAYT – 35G cart + 2nd cart

- Advantages:
  - No additional costs for residents disposing of an average household amounts
  - Convenient for residents willing to pay
  - Cost effective way to dispose of excess waste without burdening average taxpayer
  - Easiest and most efficient collection; no additional collection costs (unless bags included)
- Drawbacks:
  - Incentive to reduce not incremental; tendency to “fill the 2nd cart”
  - Collection/disposal of existing containers and management of future carts (tbd)

Option #1
How would this impact Westford Households?

- Most residents would pay nothing extra most of the time
- Option #1 – 2nd Cart
  - Cart purchase/lease by customer; costs range from $65-$85
  - Annual sticker sold by Town (most common); range from $180-240
  - Based on 2025 survey data, 33% of households would require 2nd cart based on current disposal behavior
  - At $200/annual, this would cost $16.67/month, or $3.85/week
  - Convenient, predictable weekly capacity
  - Costs don't factor in waste above 2 35G carts
    - Survey results indicate this is about 7% of households

Option #2

Hybrid PAYT – 35G carts + overflow bags

- Program features:
  - 35G cart – 1 per household under current tax levy (no charge)
  - Bags available for purchase at local retailers for overflow
    - Options for multiple bag (small/large)
    - Fees – Town fees range from Average across MA municipalities with bags is $2.46.

Option #2

Hybrid PAYT – 35G carts + overflow bags

- Advantages:
  - No additional costs for residents disposing of an average household amounts
  - Incrementally incentives reduction of waste over 35G
  - Cost effective way to dispose of excess waste without burdening average taxpayer
  - Could always add 2nd cart option in the future
- Drawbacks:
  - Increased collection costs (revenue share with hauler)
  - Collection/disposal of existing containers and management of future carts (tbd)

Option #2

How would this impact Westford Households?

- Most residents would pay nothing extra most of the time
- Option #2 – Overflow bags
  - Bags would be sold at area retailers; typically, this includes grocery, convenience, and hardware stores at the register
  - Based on 2025 survey data, 27% of households would require 2 bags most of the time; an additional 6% would require 3 bags most of the time
  - Average fee across MA for PAYT bags is $2.46
  - At $2.50 per bag per week, 27% of households would pay $130/year, or $10.83/month, to dispose of trash that doesn't fit in a 35G cart
  - No cost bags could be distributed to qualifying households similar to current tax exemption programs

How would this impact Westford's goals?

- Reduction of overall trash tonnage:
  - Target tons per household metric = **.69** *(includes all collections)*
  - FY2027 conservative projection - 10% reduction in collection for eligible households with curbside service = 525 tons
  - Tipping fee (disposal cost) savings of $55,000
  - CO2 emissions reduction of 470-630 metric tons
- Revenue from bag sales cover costs of excess waste disposal and fund additional recycling and waste programs

Other recommendations
Town/School trash services

- Due to an increase in illegal dumping and authorized use of Town and School dumpsters, staff is recommending:
  - Locks will be placed on all Town/School dumpsters
  - New signage at Town/School properties & additional enforcement
  - Public education campaign in planning stages
  - Several dumpsters will be removed from some fields/parks; DPW-Parks staff will collect and transport barrel trash and continue to monitor
- Trash and recycling services at Housing Authority properties
  - Charge for services per 2019 Select Board policy, or
  - Discontinue collection & disposal

Other recommendations & actions

Additional diversion opportunities

- Mattress collection program with UTEC
  - Agreement anticipated for October Select Board agenda
- Food Waste/Organics curbside & drop-off being revisited
- Public survey to identify other gaps in services & work with Recycling Commission to evaluate how to expand recycling opportunities (FY2026 2nd Quarter)
- Complete the Comprehensive Waste Reduction Plan (FY2026 3rd Quarter)

What is request to Select Board?

- Do we move forward with a 35-gallon cart model with a target for a July 1, 2026, implementation?
  - We anticipate having program costs/revenues and program design fully modeled in Qtr. 2, but need firm guidance on program direction to finalize vendor quotes and focus efforts
  - Final report would include recommendations on how to address overflow

- Do we develop fee-for-service proposal for housing authorities and non-profit housing providers?

Questions?

PAYT & WASTE REDUCTION PLAN UPDATE

MIKE EDWARDS

ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER – STRATEGIC OPERATIONS

SEPTEMBER 23, 2025